

Dear FCC Commissioners & Staff:

Several years ago, when Verizon (then, Bell Atlantic) was doing a market trial of a new technology called ADSL, I was in the market for high-speed Internet access. I signed up immediately, and was very happy for about two years testing their new product. I had some issues, but nothing more than you'd expect with a new technology and a large, bureaucratic company.

Then, they released ADSL to the public, and all hell broke loose. My nice, stable service was suddenly slow, I experienced long outages, and customer service was abysmal. It got even worse when they merged with GTE and became Verizon. Finally, I gave up and found a small, local ISP (ToadNet) that was offering ADSL. Their customer service was friendly, my line was stable, and performed well. Had I not had the alternative of another provider, I would have been one of the legions who either gave up on ADSL, or switched to another service.

One thing that kept me from going to cable modem during this period was the fact that cable providers had a monopoly on ISP service. My cable company was so poor at providing video service that I couldn't conceive of them providing anything reasonable for data service. I don't think anything has changed in that regard in the couple of years since then.

So, the crucial fact here is that we need competition in broadband service to keep it alive. Large ILECs have proven that they cannot service all customers well. It is important that CLECs and smaller ISP's be around to provide the level of service that the public expects, and cannot be delivered by the ILECs.

Ask yourself - do you really want your local phone company to have a monopoly on all voice and data services? Do you want your local cable company to have a monopoly on all video and data services?

I don't, and I hope you don't either.

Sincerely,

Bill Somerville
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